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160923Z Dec 05

UNCLAS PARIS 008487

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [VE](#) [FR](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: UNESCO PRIZES-SOME GOOD, SOME BAD

[1](#)1. This is an action request. See para. 5.

[1](#)2. The UNESCO secretariat issued a press release on December 14 announcing that President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela will receive the 2005 International Jose Marti Prize in a ceremony in Havana on 28 January, 2006. According to the announcement, the Marti Prize was created in 1994, (note: when the US was not a member of UNESCO) by UNESCO's Executive Board at Cuba's behest "to honour an individual or institution having contributed to the unity and integration of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and to the preservation of their identities, cultural traditions and historical values." The \$5,000 biennial prize is awarded on the recommendation of a seven-member international jury, which includes Nadine Gordimer, the South African Nobel Prize for Literature laureate and a member of the Secretariat. Their recommendation is forwarded to the Director General. In the past the Prize has been awarded to Mexican sociologist Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (2003), Ecuadorian painter Oswaldo Guayasam (1999), and Dominican historian Celsa Albert Bautista (1995).

[1](#)2. Comment: This is the first time this prize has been awarded to a political figure. We are disturbed that following so closely on the heels of the cultural diversity debate, that UNESCO's choice of awardee comes with such clear anti-American overtones.

[1](#)3. Fortunately, not all UNESCO prizes are created equal. One of the more worthwhile prizes is the Guillermo Cano press freedom prize that in recent years has been awarded to Cuban, Chinese and Zimbabwean journalists. This year the European Union, along with its accession states, has issued a joint nomination for Naradonya Volya, an independent newspaper that has been heavily persecuted by the government of Belarus. The prize will be awarded in the spring.

[1](#)4. Action request and comment: European Union member states have invited the United States to join in the nomination of Naradonya Volya. The nomination form has been emailed to IO/UNESCO. After being at serious loggerheads with European Union member states in recent months over the cultural diversity convention, we see this as a good opportunity to work closely with our European allies. Please advise.
Oliver